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AUTHOR Gold, Ben K.
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ABSTRACT

Between fall 1980 and fall 1981, the procedures for collegewide testing and English placement were revised at Los Angeles City College (LACC). Separate examinations were offered to native English speakers (i.e., the Stanford Achievement Test) and those whose primary language was not English (i.e., the English Placement Test of the University of Michigan). Of the 5,500 students who took the College Placement Examination in fall 1981, 2,423 (44%) elected to take the test for native English speakers, and 3,077 (56%) selected the English as a Second Language (ESL) test. On the basis of test scores placement was recommended in 1 of 11 developmental courses or a college-level English course, in which placement was confirmed by a writing sample. Highlights of study findings include the following: (1) 64% of the students taking the test spoke a language other than English as their native language; (2) a greater percentage of students elected the ESL test in 1981 than in 1980 (56% vs. 43%); (3) the largest ethnic group was Hispanic (29%), followed by Asian (26%); (4) 55% of the students had attended college prior to taking the examination; (5) 47% of the native group and 12% of the ESL group were placed in the college-level English course, representing about 28% of the total sample; (6) 30% of the native group and 44% of the ESL group were recommended for a Developmental Communications course, representing 38% of the sample; and (7) 59.1% of the ESL students were attending LACC to learn English. (HB)

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LOS ANGELES CITY COLLEGE

"The Fall 1981 LACC College Placement Examination"

Research Study #82-4

Ben K. Gold
Research Office
June 1982

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JC 820 255

"The Fall 1981 LACC College Placement Examination"

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Following months of deliberation by a college-wide testing committee, the Guidance Examination for students entering the college in Fall 1980 was extensively revised. Major features of the new procedures included the following:

(1) Two separate examinations were given at each administration, one for native English speaking students and one for students whose primary language was not English. Students were self-selected into the two groups, following a brief orientation by counselors.

(2) Each student was given two tests, as follows:

(A) Native English speakers
1. Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), Intermediate Level II, Test of Reading Comprehension
2. A writing sample

(B) ESL (English as a second language) students
1. Comprehensive English Language Tests (CELT), Structure, Form S-A.
2. A writing sample

(3) Recommendations for English placement were made on the basis of scores on both tests.

In Fall 1981, the process of administering separate tests for native English speaking students and for those whose primary language was not English was continued, with the following modifications:

(1) The reading test for native English speakers was changed to the SAT Advanced Battery, Test of Reading Comprehension.

(2) The test for "English as a second language" (ESL) students was changed to the English Placement Test, University of Michigan, 1972 (1st 20 questions omitted).

(3) Writing samples were not given, but reserved for use of instructors during the first week of classes.

(4) Curriculum revisions in both English and Developmental Communications necessitated revisions in recommendations for English placement.

(5) The name of the examination was changed to the College Placement Examination.

This study analyzes performance on the Fall 1981 College Placement Examination, given to a record 5500 students and provides comparisons with 1980 performance. (see Research Study #80-11)

PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY

The examination was given on ten announced dates and several other dates to accommodate the record number of students.

Tests were machine scored and raw score recorded for each student. These scores, together with background data provided by the students were keypunched and analyzed through selected SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) programs provided on the District computer. Appreciation is expressed to both LACC and District personnel for cooperation and assistance in expediting the data analysis.

Students were notified of recommended English placement according to their score on the examination. The following facsimile of information provided to the student indicates the scores used as cutoffs for the various course recommendations.

Form sent to student:

Name _____ Soc. Sec. No. _____ Date _____
Last First

According to your score of _____ on the SAT / MICHIGAN test, you should enroll in the indicated course:

SAT		MICHIGAN	
0-24	DEV. COM. 30	0-20	DEV. COM. 71
25-32	DEV. COM. 35	21-32	DEV. COM. 72
33-41	DEV. COM. 36	33-46	DEV. COM. 73
42-46	ENG. 21	47-52	ENG. 84
47-51	ENG. 28	53-61	ENG. 85
52 & above	ENG. 1	62-71	ENG. 86
		72 & above	ENG. 1

NOTE: To confirm enrollment in English Department courses, an evaluation of writing skills will be required during the first class meeting.

Writing Score _____ Date _____

COLLEGE PLACEMENT EXAMINATION

This card will be required at the first meeting of various college courses.

FINDINGS

5500 students took the College Placement Examination at one of the test administrations during the summer of 1981. Of these, 2423 (44.0%), by self selection, took the NATIVE test, with the remaining 3077 (56.0%) taking the ESL test.

Table 1 shows various characteristics of the students taking each test. Table 2 shows additional data collected on ESL students only. Table 3 presents the distribution of new scores, with approximate grade level shown for the SAT scores (grade levels not availabe for the ESL test). Table 4 summarizes the percentages recommended for the various levels of English. Table 5 presents mean scores for selected sub-groups of those taking the test. Figures for Fall 1980 entrants are included where available and appropriate.

TABLE 1 - Characteristics of Students Taking the Fall 1981 College Placement Examination
(Figures in percent)

	NATIVE		ESL		TOTAL	
	F81	F80	F81	F80	F81	F80
Total Number	2423 (44.0%)	1477 (56.6%)	3077 (56.0%)	1134 (43.4%)	5500 (100.0%)	2611 (100.0%)
Sex						
Male	44.8	45.6	45.7	51.3	45.2	48.1
Female	55.2	54.4	54.3	48.7	54.8	51.9
Age						
Below 20	44.2	40.6	19.2	19.3	30.2	31.4
20-24	26.0	29.4	29.6	35.2	28.0	31.9
25-29	13.0	14.6	19.9	19.5	16.9	16.7
30-34	5.5	7.2	11.9	11.6	9.1	9.1
35-39	3.5	2.9	6.7	6.1	5.3	4.3
40-44	2.3	1.8	4.8	2.9	3.7	2.3
45-49	1.7	1.0	2.1	1.6	1.9	1.3
50-54	1.4	0.6	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.1
55-59	0.7	0.5	0.9	0.5	0.8	0.5
60-64	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
65plus	1.6	1.0	2.9	1.1	2.3	1.0
Mean age	24.4	23.9	28.5	26.9	26.7	25.2
Median age	21.1	21.6	25.3	25.8	23.9	23.5
Ethnic						
Black	41.1	43.6	1.5	1.4	18.9	25.0
Hispanic	19.1	17.4	37.2	32.9	29.2	24.2
White	20.0	20.9	9.1	10.0	13.9	16.1
Asian	8.7	8.0	40.4	44.0	26.5	23.9
Amer. Ind.	0.9	1.1	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.8
Filipino	5.2	3.8	4.7	5.2	4.9	4.4
Other	5.0	5.1	6.6	6.0	5.8	5.5
Native Language						
English	79.8	79.6	1.6	0.7	36.1	44.9
Spanish	8.2	9.3	42.1	34.3	27.1	20.3
Vietnamese	1.2	1.2	13.9	14.1	8.3	6.9
Chinese	1.9	1.8	11.2	11.5	7.1	6.0
Korean	1.7	1.4	11.0	13.6	6.9	6.8
Filipino	3.3	2.8	4.8	5.5	4.1	4.0
Russian	0.3	0.1	2.5	2.8	1.5	1.3
Arabic	0.5	0.6	1.4	2.1	1.0	1.3
Japanese	0.3	0.3	1.2	2.4	0.8	1.2
Others	2.8	2.9	10.3	13.0	7.0	7.3

(con't)

	NATIVE		ESL		TOTAL	
	F81	F80	F81	F80	F81	F80
Months in U.S.						
0-5	1.7	1.9	6.6	9.0	4.4	5.0
6-12	14.8	3.7	10.4	12.8	7.3	7.7
13-24	21.2	13.9	23.9	21.9	18.9	17.5
over 24	8.7	80.5	58.9	56.3	69.2	67.9
Last High School Attended						
L.A. City	55.3	54.3	21.3	27.9	36.3	43.3
Other CA	14.8	14.5	2.0	2.7	7.6	9.6
Other U.S.	21.2	24.8	3.5	2.8	11.2	15.7
Foreign	8.7	6.4	73.2	66.5	44.8	31.4
L.A. City School (top ten)						
Belmont	6.6	5.9	5.4	6.8	5.9	6.1
Los Angeles	5.9	4.9	2.7	3.1	4.1	4.0
Hollywood	4.3	3.6	2.9	3.2	3.5	3.3
Marshall	5.4	5.6	1.6	2.5	3.3	4.1
Fairfax	3.4	3.8	2.0	2.7	2.6	3.2
Man. Arts	3.4	2.5	0.4	0.3	1.7	1.5
Crenshaw	2.3	2.8	0.1	0.1	1.1	1.6
Fremont	2.2	1.9	0.0	0.1	1.0	1.0
Franklin	0.9	1.3	0.1	0.6	0.5	1.0
Washington	0.8	1.8	0.0	0.1	0.4	1.0
Previous College						
None	47.1	54.3	44.2	46.4	45.4	51.0
LACCD	35.2	28.8	28.1	20.5	31.2	25.3
Other CC	6.5	7.1	2.5	1.6	4.3	4.8
CSUC	1.9	0.7	0.6	1.2	1.2	1.0
UC	1.2	0.9	0.7	0.4	0.9	0.7
Other	8.1	8.0	24.0	29.9	17.0	17.3

TABLE 2 - Additional Data for ESL Students Only
(Figures in %)

Country of Birth	(N=3077) F1981	(N=1134) F1980
Central America	20.7	11.5
Vietnam	18.0	16.9
Korea	11.3	14.2
South America	8.6	9.5
U.S.	7.4	6.5
Mexico	6.3	7.1
Philippines	4.2	5.1
China	3.3	3.3
USSR	2.6	3.3
Armenia	1.9	2.5
Thailand	1.5	2.4
Cuba	1.5	1.0
HongKong	1.3	1.4
Japan	1.2	2.4
Taiwan	1.2	-
Others(LI%)	8.3	8.7

Language Spoken in Home		
Spanish	41.2	33.9
Chinese	13.0	12.0
Vietnamese	12.0	13.5
Korean	10.9	13.5
Filipino	4.2	5.0
English	4.0	3.1
Russian	1.7	2.7
Arabian	1.2	2.2
Japanese	1.1	1.9
Other LI%	10.7	12.2

Years of Education	F1981	F1980
Less than 9	6.9	5.8
9	2.9	2.6
10	5.7	5.2
11	5.8	6.1
12	40.0	38.5
13	10.0	11.9
14	11.6	11.9
15	6.0	5.1
16	7.2	7.6
More than 16	4.2	5.3

Difficulty with English (Median response 1=none 5=alot)		
Reading	2.60	2.58
Writing	2.78	2.89
Speaking	2.79	2.80

Reason for Attending LACC (Multiple answers permitted)	(%)	(%)
To learn English	59.1	52.0
To prepare to transfer to a 4yr. coll.	44.9	56.5
To prepare for a job	41.9	36.3
Other	5.4	1.9

TABLE 3A - Distribution of Fall 1981 College Placement Exam Raw Scores: Native Students (N=2416)

Raw Score	Grade Level	No.	Cum. %	Eng. Rec.	Raw Score	Grade Level	No.	Cum. %	Eng. Rec.	Raw Score	Grade Level	No.	Cum. %	Eng. Rec.
0	-	0	0.0	DC30	26	5.7	20	8.2		51	10.9	41	52.7	E28
1	-	1	0.1		27	5.8	21	9.1		52	11.2	41	54.4	E1
2	-	0	0.1		28	6.0	27	10.2		53	11.3	52	56.5	
3	-	0	0.1		29	6.3	26	11.3		54	11.4	40	58.7	
4	-	3	0.2		30	6.5	33	12.7		55	11.5	60	61.1	
5	-	1	0.2		31	6.6	26	13.7		56	11.6	53	63.3	
6	-	3	0.4		32	6.8	33	15.1	DC35	57	11.7	38	64.9	
7	-	1	0.4		33	7.1	27	16.2	DC36	58	11.8	61	67.4	
8	-	0	0.4		34	7.2	33	17.6		59	11.9	63	70.0	
9	-	2	0.5		35	7.3	46	19.5		60	12.0	72	73.0	
10	-	3	0.6		36	7.6	34	20.9		61	12.1	56	75.3	
11	-	4	0.7		37	7.7	43	22.7		62	12.2	52	77.5	
12	-	2	0.8		38	7.8	41	24.4		63	12.3	56	79.8	
13	-	2	0.9		39	8.1	43	26.2		64	12.3	55	82.1	
14	-	8	1.2		40	8.2	54	28.4		65	12.4	61	84.6	
15	3.0-	7	1.5		41	8.4	40	30.0	DC36	66	12.4	60	87.1	
16	3.5	10	1.9		42	8.6	45	31.9	E21	67	12.5	57	98.4	
17	3.6	9	2.3		43	8.8	63	34.5		68	12.5	60	91.9	
18	3.9	10	2.7		44	9.2	48	36.5		69	12.6	63	94.5	
19	4.2	12	3.2		45	9.5	59	38.9		70	12.6	51	96.6	
20	4.4	14	3.8		46	9.8	59	41.4	E21	71	12.7	38	98.2	
21	4.5	12	4.3		47	10.0	54	43.6	E28	72	12.7	19	99.0	
22	4.8	14	4.9		48	10.2	64	48.5		73	12.8	15	99.6	
23	5.0	19	5.7		49	10.6	53	51.0		74	12.8	7	99.9	E1
24	5.3	21	6.5	DC30	50	10.7	62							
25	5.4	21	7.4	DC35										

Mean Raw Score=49.1, Grade Level 10.6
Median Raw Score=50.1, Grade Level 10.7

Lower Quartile=38.8
Upper Quartile=61.3

Standard Deviation=14.8

Recommended placements:

DC30	6.5
DC35	8.6
DC36	14.9
Engl.21	11.4
Engl.28	11.3
Engl.1	47.3
	100.0%

TABLE 3B - Distribution of Fall 1981 College Placement Exam Raw Scores: ESL Students (N=3003)

Raw Score	No.	Cum %	Engl. Rec.	Raw Score	No.	Cum %	Engl. Rec.	Raw Score	No.	Cum. %	Engl. Rec.	Raw Score	No.	Cum. %	Engl. Rec.
1	0	0.0	DC71	21	34	8.1	DC72	41	49	36.7		61	58	70.4	E85
2	0	0.0		22	20	8.8		42	34	37.9		62	44	71.9	E86
3	1	0.1		23	33	9.9		43	56	39.7		63	48	73.5	
4	1	0.1		24	45	11.4		44	42	41.1		64	41	74.9	
5	2	0.1		25	32	12.5		45	40	42.5		65	56	76.7	
6	5	0.3		26	38	13.7		46	55	44.4	DC73	66	49	78.4	
7	5	0.5		27	34	14.9		47	51	46.1	E84	67	59	80.3	
8	5	0.6		28	41	16.2		48	51	47.8		68	67	82.6	
9	1	0.7		29	43	17.6		49	46	49.3		69	56	84.4	
10	10	1.0		30	42	19.0		50	46	50.8		70	65	86.6	
11	10	1.3		31	33	20.1		51	57	52.7		71	56	88.4	E86
12	9	1.6		32	40	21.5	DC72	52	52	54.5	E84	72	49	90.1	E1
13	7	1.9		33	38	22.7	DC73	53	44	55.9	E85	73	58	92.0	
14	9	2.2		34	46	24.3		54	59	57.9		74	53	93.8	
15	18	2.8		35	55	26.1		55	65	60.1		75	51	95.5	
16	14	3.2		36	58	28.0		56	45	61.6		76	42	96.9	
17	29	4.2		37	56	29.9		57	49	63.2		77	36	98.1	
18	28	5.1		38	51	31.6		58	37	64.4		78	36	99.3	
19	33	6.2		39	55	33.4		59	62	66.5		79	18	99.9	
20	23	7.0	DC71	40	50	35.1		60	60	68.5		80	4	100.0	

Mean Raw Score = 48.8
Medium Raw Score = 49.9

Lower Quartile = 34.8
Upper Quartile = 64.6

Standard Deviation = 18.1

Recommended Placement	
DC 71	7.0
DC 72	14.5
DC 73	22.9
Engl.84	10.1
Engl.85	15.9
Engl.86	10.0
Engl.1	11.6
	100.0%

TABLE 4 - Summary of Recommendations for English Placement

NATIVE (N-2416)

DC30	6.5
DC35	8.6
DC36	14.9
Engl.21	11.4
Engl.28	11.3
Engl.1	47.3
	100.0%

ESL (N-3003)

DC71	7.0
DC72	14.5
DC73	22.9
Engl.84	10.1
Engl.85	15.9
Engl.86	18.0
Engl.1	11.6
	100.0%

COMBINED (N=5419)

Rec. for Dev. Com.	38.0%
Rec. for English below English 1	34.5%
Rec. for English 1	27.5%
	100.0%

TABLE 5 - Mean READING Raw Scores for Selected Subgroups

Group	NATIVE			ESL		
	No.	Mean	Gr. Level	No.	Mean	
Grand Total	2403	49.1	10.6	2827	49.1	
Sex						(GRADE LEVEL NOT AVAILABLE FOR ESL)
Male	1077	50.7	10.9	1286	49.7	
Female	1326	47.8	10.2	1541	48.6	
Ethnic						
Black	909	46.5	9.9	39	53.6	
Hispanic	426	49.4	10.6	987	46.8	
White	448	58.1	11.8	241	55.8	
Asian	193	47.8	10.2	1049	49.8	
Filipino	115	49.3	10.6	127	64.7	
Native Lang.						
English	1853	50.8	10.8	45	55.8	
Spanish	189	45.7	9.7	1150	46.8	
Vietnamese	29	43.6	9.0	357	50.1	
Korean	37	36.3	7.6	297	45.4	
Filipino	75	46.4	9.9	135	63.6	
Chinese	44	46.4	9.9	306	50.5	
Russian	6	48.0	10.2	70	49.5	
High School						
L.A. City	1285	48.0	10.2	556	57.2	
Other CA Publ.	225	54.9	11.5	35	58.5	
CA Private	118	56.0	11.6	17	64.7	
West St.	40	51.4	11.0	17	52.5	
W. Center St.	20	54.8	11.5	1	44.0	
Center St.	114	54.9	11.5	11	58.3	
So. Center St.	51	56.2	11.6	8	53.8	
Southern St.	127	49.1	10.6	24	49.1	
No. East St.	134	53.5	11.4	29	58.1	
Foreign	196	42.5	8.7	1855	47.9	
Foreign by Area						
Latin Amer.	53	42.3	8.7	729	42.9	
Far East	63	39.3	8.1	796	50.9	
Near East.	11	49.6	10.7	85	50.6	
West. Eur.	21	48.0	10.2	22	62.5	
East Eur.	9	53.3	11.3	94	51.6	
So. Pacific	27	35.0	7.5	109	50.1	
Africa	10	48.7	10.4	18	55.3	

(Con't.)

	NATIVE			ESL	
	No.	Mean	Gr. Level	No.	Mean
Age					
Below 20	1067	49.2	10.6	565	54.1
20-24	626	49.9	10.7	830	49.0
25-29	307	50.2	10.8	556	49.1
30-34	131	48.2	10.2	340	47.1
35-39	82	49.9	10.7	194	47.1
40-44	55	46.5	9.9	135	46.6
45-49	40	42.7	8.7	58	43.4
50-54	33	47.9	10.2	41	36.3
55-59	16	34.5	7.3	27	45.4
60-64	9	53.7	11.3	10	38.9
65 plus	37	42.8	8.8	68	40.1
L.A. High Schools (N>50)					
Belmont	154	49.3	10.6	144	57.5
L.A.	136	44.8	9.4	72	55.3
Marshall	126	55.2	11.5	40	62.1
Hollywood	99	46.7	9.9	78	59.9
Fairfax	78	49.9	10.7	50	58.8
Man. Arts	78	45.9	9.8	12	56.4
Jefferson	56	41.9	8.6	4	41.5
Crenshaw	52	45.8	9.8	4	44.8
Fremont	52	45.5	9.7	0	-
Previous College					
None	1132	47.8	10.2	1243	46.1
L.A. Com. Coll.	846	49.3	10.6	791	52.2
Other CC	156	52.8	11.3	74	54.2
CSUC	45	55.8	11.6	16	56.9
UC	28	60.4	12.0	18	60.0
Other	193	50.2	10.7	682	50.0
Months in U S.					
0-5	38	38.3	8.0	172	47.9
6-12	71	41.5	8.5	268	43.5
13-24	288	45.3	9.6	628	48.3
25+	1858	51.0	10.9	1562	51.8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzes performance on the Fall 1981 College Placement Examination. Following are some highlights of the findings:

(1) Reflecting increasing concerns about appropriate placement of students and staff efforts to increase participation in the College Placement Examination, a record 5500 students took the exam given prior to the Fall 1981 semester.

(2) For the second successive year, students were self-selected into two groups, one group took the SAT Advanced Test of Reading Comprehension (the NATIVE students) and the other took the Michigan English Placement Test for use by institutions offering courses in English as a Foreign Language (the ESL group) 56% of the 5500 students selected the ESL group, compared with 43% of the 2611 who took the Placement Test in Fall 1980.

(3) Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the 5500 students indicated that a language other than English was their native language, compared with 55% in Fall 1980.

(4) Largest ethnic group in the 5500 students was Hispanic (29%), followed by Asian (26%). Percent Blacks dropped from 25% in Fall 1980 (the largest ethnic group that year) to 19%, Whites dropped from 16% to 14%.

(5) Barely over a third (36%) of the 5500 students last attended a Los Angeles City High School, a drop from 48% in Fall 1980. Percentage coming from a foreign school jumped from 31% in Fall 1980 to 45% in Fall 1981.

(6) 55% of the 5500 students had attended college prior to taking the Examination, up from 49% in Fall 1980. It is suspected that many of these students were at LACC last year and had not taken the examination earlier, responding to the publicity advocating taking the test.

(7) 55% of the students were female, compared with 52% in Fall 1980, and the mean age was nearly 27, almost two years older than in Fall 1980.

(8) Additional information collected on the 3077 ESL students indicated increasing numbers coming from Central America,* and continuing large numbers from Vietnam, Korea, South America, Mexico and the Philippines. More ESL students in Fall 1981 indicated their reason for attending LACC as "to learn English" (59% compared to 52% in 1980) and "to prepare for a job (41% compared to 36% in 1980), less as "to prepare to transfer" (45% compared to 56% in 1980).**

*This study does not provide data on individual countries, but other studies indicate large numbers from El Salvador.

**Multiple answers permitted on this question.

(9) Due to changes in both of the tests, comparison of scores between 1981 and 1980 is difficult. However, NATIVE students averaged at about the tenth grade reading level, as did the 1980 natives.

(10) About 28% of the total groups were recommended for English 1 -- 47% of the NATIVE group, 12% of the ESL group.

(11) About 38% of the total groups were recommended for Developmental Communications -- 30% of the NATIVE group, 44% of the ESL group.

(12) In comparing mean raw score performance, males performed better than females (in both groups), Filipinos averaged the highest on the ESL test, Hispanics the lowest. In general, younger students performed better than older students.

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15

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